

processfix

Winter newsletter 2012/2013

Welcome

Put yourself in the position where you're ready to start on the journey to process improvement; at the outset you may have difficulty in getting buy-in, face cultural barriers, or simply find it difficult to decide on your starting point. To realise the benefits of process improvement, you will need to persevere, and at Processfix we have seen some great examples of perseverance.

Whatever the desired outcome, our clients have been determined to succeed. They have been helped by a combination of elements, including: a clear and constant statement of objectives; continued enthusiasm for the potential benefits of any process improvements; and solid preparation to ensure the maximum benefit possible is achieved.

In this issue we travel to Australia to find out how Simon Hall, School Manager of the Melbourne School of Psychological Sciences, prepared his teams for a recent Rapid Improvement Workshop with Processfix.

Then we hear how Claire Gale, Student IS Manager in the Student Systems & Reporting Team at Cranfield University, found external funding to support their business transformation project and undertook thorough research with Processfix to develop the right approach for Cranfield's needs.

Finally, in the spotlight this edition, we talk to Mark Lewis, the CFO of Valiant Petroleum Plc, whose broad ranging and global experience offers valuable insight into what is achievable and realistic in terms of process improvement.

NEWSFLASH!

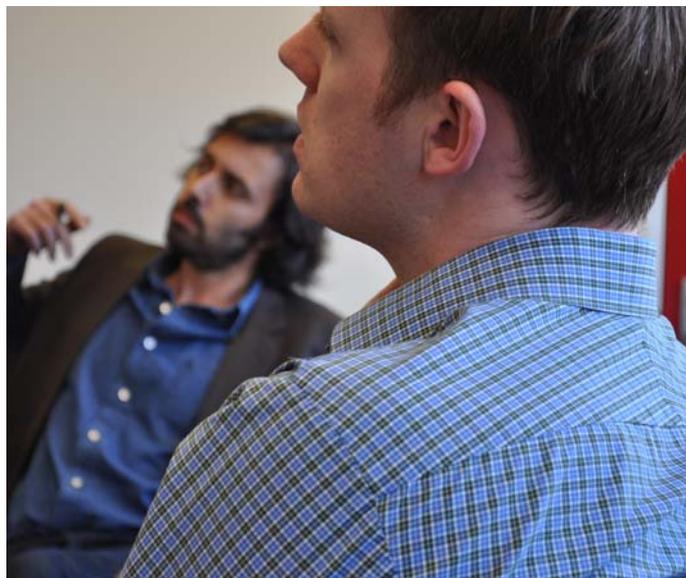
London, UK – November 2012

The UK's Financial Services Compensation Scheme invest in Processfix training following huge surge in claims



Solid preparation drives success in Melbourne

Simon Hall is the School Manager of the Melbourne School of Psychological Sciences, which sits within the Faculty of Medicine, Dentistry & Health Sciences at The University of Melbourne, Australia. He had come across Processfix when working as the Head of International Recruitment at the University of Warwick, and saw the potential for a Rapid Improvement Workshop in his new role in Melbourne.



"As School Manager, I have a very broad ranging role. I can be doing anything from working on admissions processes through to finance, marketing through to occupational health and safety! But a core defined responsibility is for the 18 administrative staff at the School, which includes team building and professional development."

Simon went on to explain how he thought a Processfix workshop might help him achieve his goals, as well as deliver efficiencies within the existing processes: "No-one had ever really looked at the processes in the School in terms of mapping, or questioning what was most

efficient. Because I'd previously been involved in a Processfix workshop in the UK, I expected that we would be able to realise benefits in terms of efficiency, but additionally, I was looking for the softer benefits that arise from this kind of team-building workshop: relationships strengthened, opportunities opened up, constructive discussions enabled."

A Processfix team travelled to Melbourne at the beginning of September 2012 for a three day workshop with the School's admissions (academic programs) team, two academics, one who was directly involved in the admissions process and one who

was not, an individual from the University's central admissions team, another from the University's student information system team, and one staff member from the faculty student support centre.

But the work behind making sure that this investment in both finance and time was a success started long before then.

"To give up three days out of your normal working life to try

"But the work behind making sure that this investment in both finance and time was a success started long before then."

something different, especially something coming from another part of the world is a significant commitment, and within an academic environment, proof of outcome is always desirable before undertaking a process!" explained Simon. "I first spent time discussing with the key stakeholders my own experience with Processfix in the UK, and we agreed to go forward into the process cautious, but optimistic."

"I also had a lot of work to do in terms of providing data for analysis so that the Processfix team were able to deliver a workshop that was tightly tailored to our processes. The issue for us was that such data is not always forthcoming in our particular area, nor is the data very reliable. Robust data provides a strong starting point against which the workshop team is able to evaluate and discuss the potential areas for change and improvements."

Simon was pleased to tell us that the perseverance and preparation has paid off in several ways. A detailed implementation plan was

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When perseverance pays dividends

Following a pan university business process review of student processes at Cranfield University, Claire Gale, currently Student IS Manager, Student Systems & Reporting Team, took on the challenge to form a Business Transformation Team ('BTT') which would underpin and support all change activities and ensure realisation of agreed benefits.

Claire explained: "The specific problem area in the management of a student's experience is that the existing system is inconsistent and processes are devolved to the schools which means communication between schools, departments and campuses of the university, is challenged. This has led, in some instances, to a poor customer experience." The BTT project has defined some clear objectives and Claire has spent the last nine months researching, championing and implementing activities which will best drive the team forward to meet these goals.

"I needed to find the right way to work with the team so that we could all come to the same place at the same time."

Claire first tackled the issue of funding. As we all know, budgets are stretched further and further every year. She investigated options and successfully completed a tender for funding from JISC*.

She then considered how best to approach the implementation of the project. "I saw that the people on the ground, administrators up to office managers, needed to understand that in order to achieve an effective development of our systems, we have to look at our processes and come up with the right foundations or requirements. I needed to find the right way to work with the team so that we could all come to the same place at the same time."

One part of Claire's research included a review of the Processfix approach. She met first with Processfix in 2011 to discuss how their team could help to train people within Cranfield to become process review facilitators. "We needed to look at our issues at two levels: the Main BTT considering the higher level strategic issues and the many Sub BTTs within each

school and department evaluating the lower level processes, feeding these into the Main BTT."

Following this, she and a colleague attended a Processfix masterclass in 2012 to experience at first hand



a Rapid Improvement Workshop. Subsequently, she has worked with Processfix to develop a blend between a process analyst course and a process facilitator course to meet the specific needs at Cranfield. So, armed with a researched training plan and having secured funding, Claire gained the commitment of the Improving Student Processes (ISP) Programme Board (chaired by the Secretary and Registrar) to support her plan. "I took the findings of all my investigations to the programme board and asked for their full backing, to give people time to attend the workshop. I'm pleased to say that they agreed to ensure that all those nominated for the course would be given time to attend."

The four-day workshop took place at the end of November 2012, and was attended by 14 people from five schools, central services, and Claire. Every level was represented: from administration through to office manager level. The aim was to give everyone a complete holistic understanding of process review, and to equip them with the skills to go out and facilitate the business transformation teams. Some quotes from the attendees included:

"This was a really useful workshop and I'm now equipped with some great ideas to use in the review of processes in my own area." Admissions Officer

"I found this very helpful in introducing new concepts, and in building confidence that I can now facilitate workshops for process improvements in the school." Programme Administrator

"The workshop was thought-provoking and fun. I'm now keen to get started..." Business Analyst

"I've had to work hard to get people to understand what we're trying to achieve with the BTT. But the workshop was a success with all attendees fully engaged for the whole four days. Following the success of the workshop, we

are now ready to review our processes and with the schools and central services working collaboratively, we will make our student experience the best. We work in a very competitive sector: we need to achieve best value for money, for the individual students and for the university. We will achieve this by streamlining our processes, so people have more time to work on the soft skills in relation to the students."

Footnote:

*JISC = Joint Information Systems Committee, who champion the use of digital technology to ensure the UK remains world-class in research, teaching and learning. JISC fund a wide range of infrastructure, services, innovative projects and studies.

Objectives of the BTT

- Create a flexible network structure across the university to provide a communication channel for business process change;
- Improve the efficiency and communication across the university in order to provide transparency between organisational strategy and IT strategy;
- Be responsible for the identification of business process improvement opportunities, the facilitation of workshops and the progression of process changes in partnership with all relevant service areas;
- Identify and train Business Process Change Champions in all areas of the university;
- Take an active part in the current and required business process improvement team workshops and quality review meetings;
- Support the definition and review of business process improvement procedures, the underpinning actions required
- Work with the service area management and staff to facilitate change within the service areas to be improved;
- Attend regular checkpoint meetings to ensure that project progress is assessed and team issues are formally communicated.



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devised at the workshop, and the team have instituted fortnightly catch-up meetings to review how they are progressing. This has helped to meet deadlines, but also provided an open and neutral forum for discussion.

"Because we approached the workshop as a team, people are more able now to raise issues and have a constructive discussion. Channels of communication have been opened up, and silos have been broken down."

The team were also pleased to achieve outcomes that had not been expected, realising that there were different ways available to do things. For example, the current student management system had been in place for over a year, but the admissions team were unaware of updates that could

In the spotlight: Mark Lewis, CFO Valiant Petroleum Plc

CFO at Valiant since April 2010, Mark Lewis believes that nearly a quarter of his working life has been focused on making processes work better, and he has recently held a Processfix workshop at Valiant.

Initially working within strategy consulting, Mark's career includes time with companies whose activities include industrial diamond manufacturing (Element Six), motoring services (RAC Plc) and oil exploration and production (Valiant).

Mark's broad ranging experience means that he has seen in practice the benefits of good process: the tangible, measureable outcomes and the intangible. "When a team is working well, with good processes in place, the team members tend to have more fun!"



What encouraged you to choose a career in management?

I took a degree in engineering, economics and management at Oxford, and my first work was in electronics with Racal. However, I wanted to broaden my experience of management and business. In the 1980s, strategic consultancy offered very good access to decision makers in a wide range of businesses, addressing a particularly broad range of issues.

What's behind your interest in process improvement?

A personal instinct, whenever I've had responsibility for a group of people, or an activity, has always been to make the work more streamlined and systematic. But I also think it's very important to recognise that seeking to 'work better' rarely equates to 'work harder'. We used to think there were trade-offs: improved results at the expense of working harder or faster. Now, we strive to 'work smarter'. The improvements that have become possible, initially in manufacturing, but increasingly in services, are really quite dramatic. Find ways to 'work smarter' and you can see massive simultaneous improvements

in time, costs and quality. Importantly, you can also deliver a less stressful environment for those involved and help them to have fun whilst achieving their goals.

Is it possible to balance proposed effort with desired outcomes before you proceed?

That's quite difficult to answer. A lot of the benefits from process change are intangible: things you wouldn't necessarily expect. If you are able to work smarter, freeing people up from fixing day to day crises for example, will give the time and energy to look at other projects. So on the whole, I would say that there is always a benefit to driving process change.

Have you seen many significant differences in approach to process improvement through your career?

All of the cultures around the world have their own idiosyncrasies. However, I believe that if you have a group of people determined to do a good job, and help them with the right tools, you can usually galvanise them into positive action.

A critical skill is the ability to step back and see how things could be, rather than focussing on how

things are. If you know what you're trying to deliver, you can reduce a process to the essential elements, removing the 'because we've always done it that way' factors.

Where do you see the hub of process improvement? Is it an individual skill or best embedded into a corporate culture?

It's definitely more powerful if it's embedded in a culture. I've managed organisations where we embedded process thinking to the extent that every team on the factory floor stopped for 10 minutes each day to discuss results and suggest improvements. People took ownership of their processes and believed that they could make a difference, so they did.

But to do this takes time. On the one hand, you can make isolated changes very quickly and achieve real benefits. To transform an organisation's culture though takes time.

Would you agree that in process improvement, perseverance pays off?

I'm always over ambitious about what can be achieved by when,

"If you know what you're trying to deliver, you can reduce a process to the essential elements, removing the 'because we've always done it that way' factors."

and will constantly chip away until I achieve my goals. During the recent Processfix workshop at Valiant we discussed the idea that the first solution you come up with isn't always the best, you might need to keep looking, or even discard an innovation you've just implemented. That doesn't mean you shouldn't continue though; perseverance definitely does pay off long term.

"Because we approached the workshop as a team, people are more able now to raise issues and have a constructive discussion. Channels of communication have been opened up, and silos have been broken down."

make certain processes easier. Since the workshop, relationships with the people running the system have improved and the admissions team are now being trained to an enhanced level within the systems available.

Simon went on to tell us: "We have been pleased to present our findings to the entire School. We wanted to show that we are not afraid to stop and review what we do, and find ways to do things differently. But alongside this, it's important to note that it's not a 'quick fix'; you need to be

fully behind the concept of a Rapid Improvement Workshop. As with the majority of things that are worthwhile long-term, there's a significant investment in preparation prior to holding a Processfix workshop. And we haven't experienced a revolution following it. What we do have is a whole team of people fully committed to a defined implementation plan. We are confident that within 6-12 months there will be tangible positive outcome in terms of work practice and the broader applicant experience."

About us

Organisations rely on processes to get things done. Often these simply evolve over time and become inefficient ways of working. Processfix bring powerful, proven and behaviour-changing techniques to bear in a professionally facilitated environment.

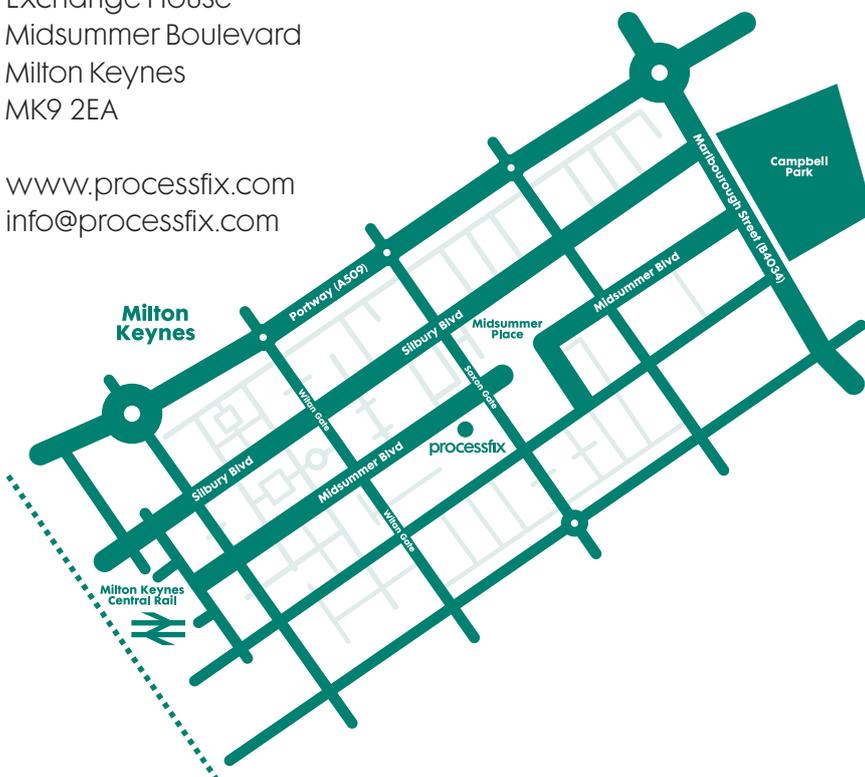
We focus on engaging your teams in their own improvement, empowering them to re-evaluate the way they do things and to develop new and improved ways of working that transform performance and deliver immediate results.

Whether you require Rapid Improvement Workshop facilitation, training, project leadership or an organisational wide process improvement programme. Processfix specialise in facilitating your team, delivering immediate benefits and instilling continuous improvement across your organisation.

If you would like to find out how Processfix can benefit your organisation, please contact us at:

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